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World War One ILLUSTRATED™

HOG ISLAND SHIPYARD

POWS IN BRITAIN

CELEBRITY POW: VON TIRPITZ

ANZAC FORCES

FILMING ON THE EASTERN FRONT

WAR FROM A STUTZ BEARCAT

SOMME

POST WAR FASCISM

NAVY MASCOTS

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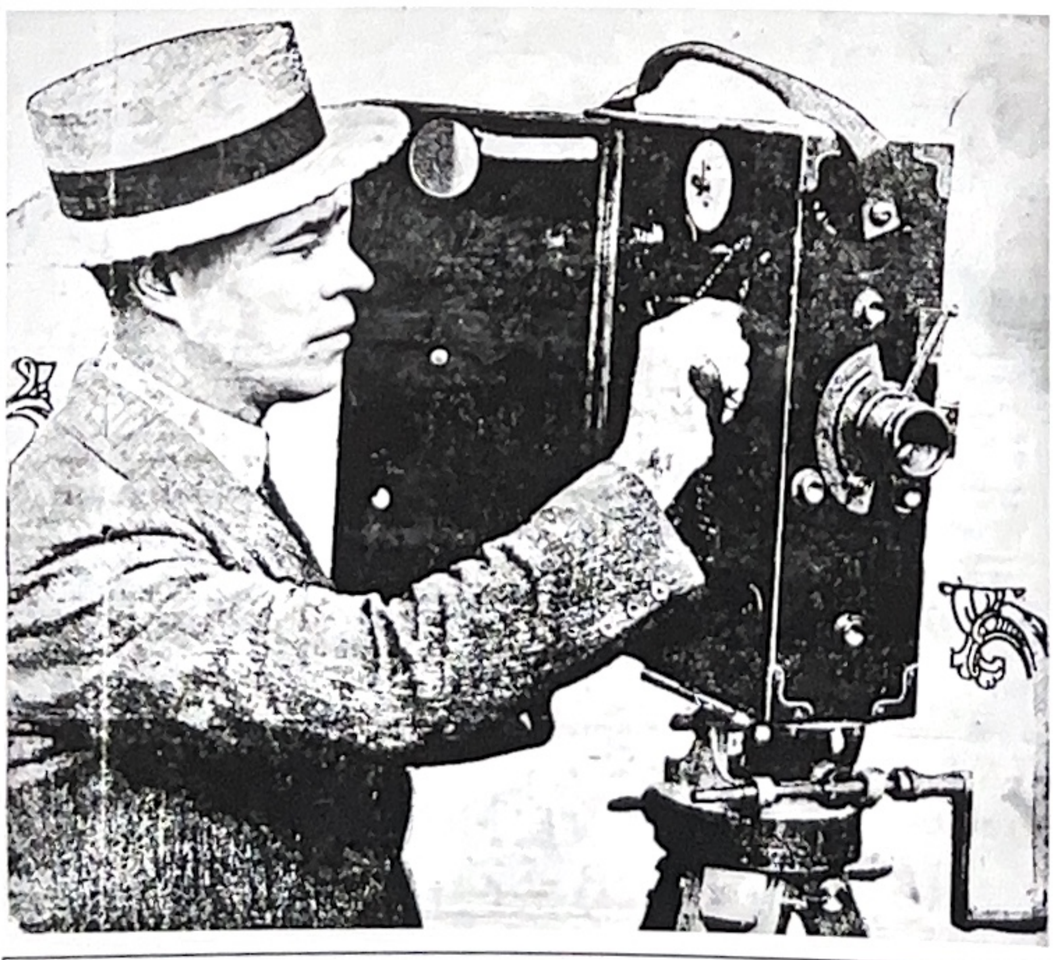
CAMERAMAN A. E. WALLACE ON THE EASTERN FRONT (1915)

Today, Ansel E. Wallace is a minor footnote in World War I history books, which seems strange because he was the first American cameraman to film with the German army on the Eastern Front.

RON VAN DOPPEREN AND COOPER C. GRAHAM

Ansel Earle Wallace was born on October 30, 1884, in South Bend, Indiana. He and his older brother Harry were both photographers, learning the tricks of the trade from their father John M. Wallace who had his own studio in Evansville, Indiana, from 1898, specializing in portraits and commercial photography.

Young Wallace exemplified the virtues and vices of a modern press photographer. He was ambitious, persuasive and hungry to get the picture. His first news photographs were made for the *Evansville Courier*. In 1904, Wallace moved to St. Louis, working for several local newspapers. This is where the celebrated photographer William H. Rau selected Wallace as part of his team to cover the St. Louis World's Fair. The official photo album has a picture of Ansel standing at attention and looking eager to move ahead in the world.



Wallace grinding his movie camera for Hearst-Selig News Pictorial. Reproduced from *Boston American*, August 29, 1915. Author's collection

His wish for fame was answered in 1905 by Hearst's International News Service (INS). Wallace was assigned that year as staff photographer to the *Chicago American*. It turned out to be a smart career move. In order to beat the competition Hearst invested heavily in his illustrated newspapers and he was always looking for young talented photographers. It was at the Hearst papers where Wallace hit his stride and was groomed to be their first official war photographer.

Hearst sent Wallace to Germany in November 1914 to compensate for the lack of news coming from that country. The British had cut the transatlantic cables and practically controlled all news to America. As a result, Hearst offered his complete media outlet to the Germans, free of charge with no questions asked, in return for pictures showing daily life in the streets of Berlin, the POW camps and, in particular. shots of the destruction by the invading Russians in East Prussia. At the time of Wallace's arrival, the Germans were preparing for a new counteroffensive in East Prussia to push the Russian army out of their lost territory. This was Wallace's most coveted destination: the Eastern Front.

Breaking the "Iron Ring"

Despite impeccable credentials from Count von Bernstorff, the German ambassador in the United States, and a courteous reception at the German Foreign Office, Wallace got stuck in Berlin at the Adlon hotel while waiting for permission. "They were so slow", complained Wallace. "They investigated all my past life, and even sent queries to my home in Evansville. On one occasion, disgusted, I packed up my bags and went to the station, declaring I would leave Germany and go to some other country where I would

be permitted to film the fighting."

Wallace felt he was caught by German bureaucracy in an "iron ring" and indeed he was. Despite Hearst's generous offer the General Staff as a rule did not welcome foreign correspondents. Photographers in particular were not trusted and kept away from the frontline as much as possible. Wallace clearly needed strings to be pulled in order to reach the front.

Adlon Hotel, Berlin, opened in 1907 and was located on Unter den Linden near the Brandenburg Gate. It was the most fashionable hotel in Berlin.

This is where Wallace's personal story diverts from our findings in the German archives. According to Wallace, he was invited by U.S. Congressman Herman Metz to escape from all the red tape and beat it to Frankfurt. Metz had sailed together with Wallace on the SS *Rijndam* to Germany for business purposes. Through Metz, Wallace was introduced in Frankfurt to Princess Margaret, the youngest sister of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and her husband. Wallace said they arranged for him to film the training of German troops. "The princess gave orders that a platform be built for my camera. It was firm enough. A bomb would not have dislodged it. The officer in charge first put the soldiers through all the maneuvers. Finally, I wanted to put the big punch in the pictures. It was terrific. Fourteen thousand men running towards me!"

Wallace probably exaggerated about the number of soldiers but he did film these scenes which were taken at the barracks of the 63rd Field Artillery Regiment in Frankfurt and appeared in *Hearst Selig News Pictorial* No.1 on January 4, 1915. The footage was brought back by Metz to the United States. Part of the newsreel has survived and is now in the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Wallace also claimed that Princess Margaret wrote her brother Kaiser Wilhelm, which pressured the German officials in Berlin to allow Wallace more freedom in covering the war, all of which is true but it does not tell the whole story. Metz was of great assistance to Wallace in Frankfurt but in the end neither Metz nor German royalty signed his permits to film at the front. In order to get this done Wallace needed someone with more clout.

New army being drilled at Frankfurt. A newsreel frame shot by A.E. Wallace, located in a Signal Corps film at the National Archives, record number 111-H-1547.

The Press Agent

By the time Wallace went back to Berlin it was late December 1914. The General Staff had finally handled Wallace's request. Wallace would be permitted to go to East Prussia. But there still was no firm commitment apart from an offer to join a trench tour to the Western Front sometime in early 1915 together with a group of neutral correspondents. This clearly did not meet Wallace's wishes for exclusive pictorial coverage: "I wanted not only permission to go about in Germany as I pleased but wanted freedom of all fronts."

In order to be cut loose from German authority, Wallace probably made a deal with Dr. Lewis H. Marks who was in close contact with many American correspondents at the Adlon Hotel and acted as his informal press agent. Marks had gone to Frankfurt around 1906 to do medical research. At the outbreak of war, Marks branched out. He not only was procuring serums now for the German army. Marks was also active on a propaganda committee in Frankfurt, reportedly earned money as a middle man in the peddling of publicity stories and he was a confirmed spy for German Military Intelligence, reporting on the activities of American journalists. Independent statements by James W. Gerard, the American ambassador in Berlin, and references in documents at the German Foreign Office mention that Wallace probably bribed Marks to get him to the front. Reporting from Berlin, war correspondent J. M. aka 'Count' De Beaufort also was involved in exposing Marks' dealings. We shall meet the colorful 'Count' later on in our story. In addition, the name of the person who probably got paid by Wallace is on his military permit: Dr. Lewis H. Marks. Wallace's pass - *Ausweis 112* signed by Army Intelligence officer Karl Brose - was found by the authors in Wallace's personal papers. The permit mentions Wallace and Marks were allowed to visit the Eastern Front between 15 - 21 January 1915 in the direction of Lowicz for the purpose of taking still and moving pictures. This broadly ties in with Wallace's own story - except of course for Wallace not mentioning Marks for obvious reasons.

Armed with the necessary papers entitling him to free gas and engine repairs, as well as a driver supplied by the War Ministry, Wallace bought a car to take him to the front. Before departure the Germans weighed all film he took along. This was a clever precautionary measure to make sure Wallace would not send any pictures out of Germany before being censored. "I lost several thousand feet of film in Germany this way", he wrote, "I presume it is still there in the war ministry."

Lewis H. Marks, Wallace's secret press agent and spin doctor. Picture taken in the 1930s. Author's collection.

Departure for the Eastern Front

Their first stop was at General Headquarters in Posen. The car had been put on a train and on arrival at the station in Posen, Wallace immediately got arrested. Released by a profusely apologizing staff officer he was introduced to Field Marshal von Hindenburg, commander in chief of the eastern forces. According to an interview with Wallace in August 1915, Hindenburg was too busy and did not have time to pose for his camera. *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* No. 19, released on March 8, 1915, however has a scene showing Hindenburg and his staff, which was credited

YOU CAN BE NEUTRAL
AND STILL SHOW YOUR PATRONS THE
IDOL
OF THE
GERMAN ARMY
The master mind on which the hopes of the German Empire rest—the man, who every day, bears the greatest weight of responsibility ever placed upon the shoulders of a human being—
Field Marshal VON HINDENBERG
The first motion pictures of this Colossus of the Military World, taken at Army Headquarters in East Prussia by Staff Photographer A. E. WALLACE, will appear in the
HEARST-SELIG NEWS PICTORIAL
Number 19
Released Monday, March 8th
Another Scoop for the World's Greatest News Reel!

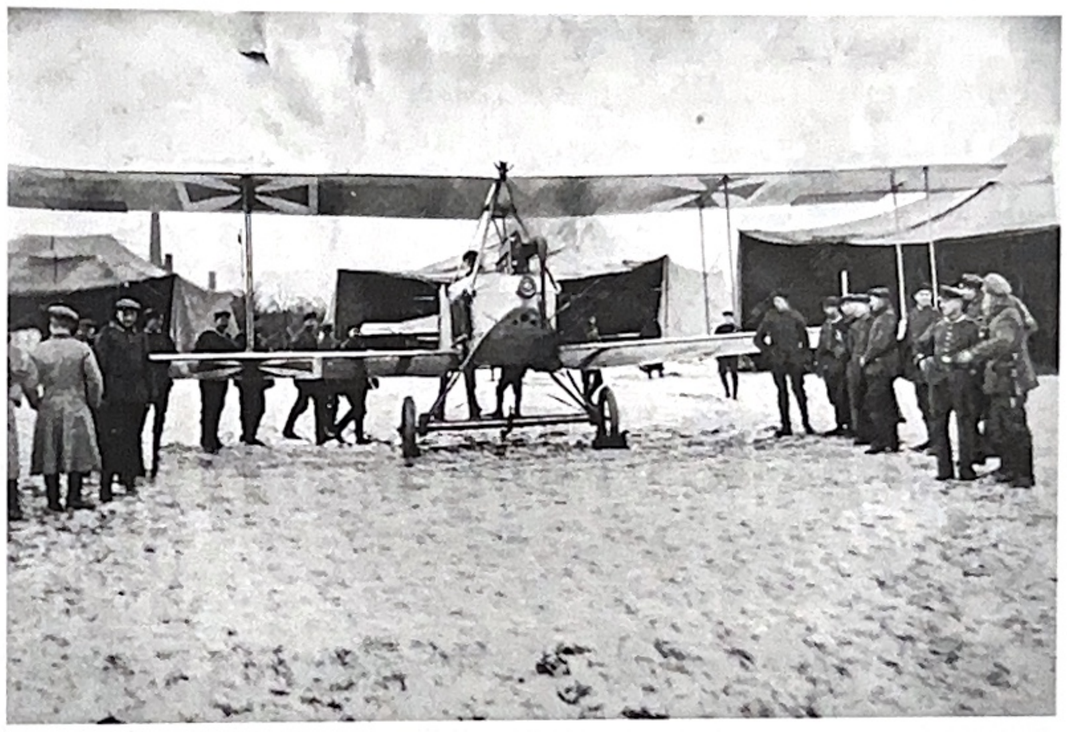
The Hero of Tannenberg, not looking overjoyed to have his picture taken, poses for Wallace's movie camera. Or so it seems. Advertisement from *Moving Picture World*, March 13, 1915.

to Wallace. The footage may have been bought by Wallace from the Germans or taken by him at a later moment.

The journey continued by train to Allenstein in East Prussia where Wallace recorded a Zeppelin flying above his hotel with machine guns mounted under the airship: "I pulled my movie outfit on to the little balcony and started filming. I just had taken a few feet, when soldiers burst in the door of the hotel, and placed me under arrest. They read my passes and released me. But the Zeppelin had gone." The same day Wallace recorded pictures of Russian prisoners of war near Hohenstein. The city, he wrote, looked like a Kansas tornado had struck it. After the Russian occupation and the retaking of the city by the German army in 1914, not much was left of Hohenstein.

The next stop was at Soldau, where more Russian prisoners were pictured, followed by Neidenburg and then to the south in the direction of the frontline near Mława. A contemporary INS press photograph, showing Russian Cossacks retreating from a village near Mława, may have been taken by Wallace at that time. Wallace's comments on the campaign were unquestionably pro-German. Shortly before his departure to the front he sent a telegram to the Kaiser, wishing him the very best on New Years Day 1915. Wallace received a personal letter in reply which he cherished very much. Without offering any evidence Wallace reported Russian atrocities near Soldau, claiming that the tendons in the right arms of German boys were cut so they could never carry arms. He also said the Germans set up soup kitchens to feed the Poles. On his return to America, Wallace mentioned the Poles seemed happy enough under German occupation, which they certainly were not.

At Łódź , Wallace ran into a German aviator whom he had met in the United States before the war. He was just about to get into his plane for a flight above Warsaw when an officer came along and put a stop to this dangerous plan. The film of this German aviator was shown in *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* No. 29 on April 12, 1915. An original INS press photograph by Wallace, showing this scene, is in the author's collection. With temperatures of nearly 40 below zero and thick layers of snow the extreme cold was a serious and most uncomfortable obstacle. Wallace mentioned he sometimes had to spend the night outside in the freezing cold. As a precaution the wheels of their military car were wrapped by ropes but even then, they frequently got stuck. In order to keep on going the car sometimes was left behind and replaced by a horse powered *droshky*, a four-wheel open carriage typical of Russian Poland.



German plane getting ready for take off on Eastern Front near Łódź. The plane is a Luft-Verkehrs Gesellshaft, LVG B.II. INS press photograph by A.E. Wallace, dated February 26, 1915. Author's collection.

Łódź, Wallace said, was the filthiest city he had ever visited. "It was an immense quagmire. The streets were almost impassable. Beggars were everywhere. Homes were ill-kept and the people were slovenly. There were large signs warning against the drinking of water because of cholera." At Łódź , Wallace filmed a review of Austrian artillery and cavalry units by General von Mackensen. The film was shown in the American theaters two months later but did not include the extraordinary making of this newsreel. As described by Wallace in 1920: "Mackensen stationed himself at the Savoy hotel and the Poles were not permitted to come near the hotel. Yet they surged up a side street for some reason. There was only one way to rout them, and the Prussian cavalry took that method. They rode their horses right up into the crowd, women and children included, and the horses knocked them down and trampled over them."

Wallace mentioned he wanted to get closer to the firing line. General von Mackensen advised him to go east to Skierniewice. The area was filled with wild dogs that were driven through starvation into the open countryside. As soon as an exhausted supply horse fell down the animal had to be shot in order to prevent the dogs from attacking. The cold in the meantime was almost unbearable. Upon arrival in Skierniewice, Wallace was quartered at the home of the Chief of the Fire Department. His wife told Wallace stories about the general slackness of Russian officers who had lounged about the house with their mistresses. At one point, his hostess said that Grand Duke Nicholas himself entered the house, slapped two officers and ordered them into the trenches with their men.

Russian prisoners at Skierniewice. Photograph by A.E. Wallace. (Courtesy LOC)

Staging War for the Movie Camera

Skierniewice used to be part of the Czar's hunting grounds and on his first day in town Wallace visited the Czar's palace which had been turned into military headquarters by the Germans. He reported on the arrest of a local Russian spy and filmed an artillery engagement that resulted in deadly casualties because of his movie coverage: "Towards our left in a clearing there was a little house. Suddenly it looked like something had exploded inside. The roof went up into the air. I switched my camera and started filming the sight. Then I found out that the little house had been filled with sleeping Germans. Unwittingly I had drawn fire on them by asking the Germans to 'pose' their guns for me." Soon after a German officer grabbed him by the arm and pulled him back: "He was inarticulate with rage as he tore off a bright orange band on my sleeve that proclaimed my newspaper affiliation."

During his stay in Skierniewice there was continual fighting. The trenches were only a short distance away and on one occasion Wallace was taken near the firing line by the local station master. From the inside of a cart, he set up his movie camera to secure a good shot. The exposure of his film turned out to be poor because it was already growing late which was just a minor disappointment compared to what happened next: "After I had grounded a bit, I became conscious of slipping and sliding over the bottom of the cart. I looked down and immediately got out. The cart had been used to bring in the maimed and shell torn victims from the trenches. One can be unconcerned where animal blood is concerned – but I was not inured to the war enough to stand the sight of human gore.

The neutral military observers, photographed by Wallace in Russian Poland, January 1915. The arrow marks Major Langhorne. Reproduced from the *New York Times Mid-Week Pictoria*l, April 15, 1915.

At Skierniewice, Wallace met Major George T. Langhorne, the military attaché from the United States. Together with military observers from other neutral countries Langhorne was touring the eastern front with the German army. Wallace filmed the observers and their picture also appeared in the *New York Times Mid-Week Pictorial* of April 15, 1915, with an INS copyright, which clearly indicates it was shot

by Wallace. According to Wallace the Germans had prepared a spectacle for the attachés to impress them with their military vigor: *"The party went out toward the front. There were many Russian prisoners who had been working on the roads a few days before, but now there was no one. I wondered but did not say anything. I soon found out the whys and wherefores. Suddenly there was a great commotion from the road which led into the forest, and there burst out a large group of Russians, running for dear life. There must have been twelve hundred Russians. Back of them came a small group of Uhlans, the fiercest of the German warriors, on horseback with drawn spears, herding the Germans like cattle. I looked closely and recognized the same Russian prisoners that a few days before were working on the roads. The military committee appeared to be satisfied they were seeing actual warfare. They did not learn of the 'frame-up' until several months later when in Berlin I took Major Langhorne aside and told him how the capture had been 'framed'. He wouldn't believe it at first. Then he laughed long and heartily at the way he and his comrades had been taken in."*

The cavalry charge may have been staged but this apparently did not deter Wallace from recording the scene. Moving Picture World reviewed *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* No. 29, released on April 12, 1915: "German cavalry charges Russians. Remarkable photographs secured by staff photographer Wallace."

"Do You Want to Get Shot?"

Wallace's trip to the front ended at Łowicz where he filmed the German Red Cross and more Russian prisoners of war. Wallace's footage taken at Łowicz for *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* No. 21, released on March 15, 1915, still is in place at the Library of Congress: "GERMAN WAR MACHINE SENDS HORDES OF MEN TO EASTERN FRONT, LOWICZ, RUSSIAN POLAND – Fresh troops brought up to push the attack of General von Hindenburg are detrained and started to the trenches."

Near Łowicz, Wallace encountered General von Morgen, commander of the 1st Reserve Corps who had distinguished himself at the recent battle of Łódź . "Hey, do you want to get shot?", von Morgen asked. "We're having a little battle and you should be able to get some pictures." "His perfect English surprised me as much as did his interest in my fate", Wallace declared. Von Morgen at the time was skirmishing near the Rawka river with his cavalry and invited Wallace to his castle. "We had a wonderful breakfast – coffee, rolls, jam and beef," Wallace noted, which must have been a fine ending to a rough trip to the front.

Lieutenant General Kurt von Morgen. (Courtesy LOC)

Wallace's time at the eastern front resulted in some spectacular pictures. But upon his return to Berlin things rapidly began to go sour. Enter J. M. aka 'Count' De Beaufort. His real name was Jacques Albert Uilenbroek, a Dutch citizen who had deserted the army and emigrated to the U.S. where he turned himself into an aristocrat, sporting a monocle, top hat and spats. De Beaufort was a con man and swindler but more pertinent to this story is that he took up journalism and went to Germany in 1915. De Beaufort stayed in the Hotel Adlon and was a key witness to how the Germans tried to manipulate the American correspondents in Berlin. In the British edition of his fascinating book *Behind the German Veil* De Beaufort referred to Wallace and how he was assisted by a press agent with the alias 'Whispering Charlie' or 'Count Hessenstein'.

Perhaps De Beaufort was using the alias to avoid a libel suit by Dr. Marks or the Hearst organization. But things definitely changed when the United States entered World War I. In a full-page article distributed nationwide, Marks' propaganda dealings were exposed. The author remains anonymous but given all the details. it most likely was De Beaufort. In the article Marks is called 'Hart', which was his middle name: *"A young American, whom we shall call Hart, came to Berlin and became the chaperon of the movie man (Wallace). With the coming of Hart things changed magically for the movie man. There came a sudden*

Con man, swindler and war correspondent J.M. aka 'Count' de Beaufort with his companion, bull pup Bob. Photograph taken circa 1912. (Courtesy LOC)

trip to Frankfurt where the troops paraded in front of his camera. Came a visit to the prison camp where the colonel of the Gordon Highlanders was a captive. And there Hart and the movie man tried to induce the colonel to sign a paper saying his regiment had used 'dum-dum bullets'. Came an audience with Helmuth von Moltke, deposed chief of the German general staff. Hart kept pulling the wires and soon the German nobility was posing for the movie man.

Presently Hart announced everything was fixed for a special trip to the Russian front. The movie man bought an automobile from a German officer at Hart's advice. Then, all booted and furred, they set out for the battle front in Poland. They were gone a long time. Hart came back first. He entered the Adlon one night, his military finery all dirty and smeared, a look of disgust on his face. 'Look at me! Have I fallen that low that I am a watchdog for a movie photographer? The trouble that fellow made me! I tell you, I've almost been queered in Germany. I am through'".

As recorded in the files of the German Foreign Office, Wallace and Marks fell apart soon after they got back to Berlin. Wallace must have resented Marks because of the bribery affair. His cooperation with Marks also presented him with a risk because of Marks' propaganda background. It is interesting to note that in his article series from 1920 Wallace described his visit to the Gordon Highlander officer in the POW camp. Wallace admitted the Germans wanted him to witness the statement on the use of dum-dum bullets by the British. But he said he slipped in a hidden message to his editor, saying the statement was a fake. Wallace also claimed to have interviewed General von Moltke, although he didn't speak a word of German. The 'interview' in reality seems to have been written down in advance and given to Wallace as an exclusive. Again, one suspects the fine hand of his press agent.

Wallace left Germany in March 1915. While crossing the British Channel his ship was captured by a new type of German super submarine. Wallace's pictures were shared with the British Admiralty and became an international hit. The British promised to send him to the Dardanelles, Wallace said, to cover the Gallipoli campaign. But in the end, he went to Rome and made pictures there of the Italian entry into the war.

About the Authors

Ron van Dopperen (left) studied history at the University of Utrecht, Holland, where he wrote his Master of Arts Thesis on the American World War I documentary films. Cooper C. Graham (right) is retired from the Library of Congress where he was a curator in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. He is the author of *Leni Riefenstahl's "Olympia"* and (in collaboration) *D.W. Griffith and the Biograph Company*. Van Dopperen and Graham co-authored *Shooting the Great War: Albert Dawson and the American Correspondent Film Company* (2013) and together with Jim Castellan *American Cinematographers in the Great War (2014)*.
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